

# African Immigrants/Refugees in the US

***Attendees will gain a better understanding of:***

*How to explore the varied and complex issues and needs of newly arriving African refugee families*

- *How to facilitate the effective transition of African immigrant and refugee families.*
- *How to develop systems of care that are tailored to the unique needs of refugee families.*

## \*Presentation

- \* Differences between immigrants and refugees - pre and post resettlement issues
- \* • Dimensions of culture - Adjustment and resettlement issues among immigrants and refugees
- \* • Family dynamics - Cultural and social implications among new comer families



# Basic facts about Africa

Africa is a land of **many people, cultures, and languages.**

It is the **second largest continent** - (after Asia)

- 54 countries
- 905 million people
- more than 3,000 different ethnic groups
- more than 2,000 spoken languages
- Arabic -(multiple dialects) is most common language

\* with about 170 million speakers

- Most Africans identify with either their tribes or nation/ country

- \* The total population of Africans in the Continent grew from **221 million in 1950 to over 1 billion in 2009.**
- \* The current population is estimated to be over a billion and accounts for **about 14% of** the world's human population and **covers 20.2%** of the earth's land.
- \* Africa's population has rapidly increased over the last 40 years is relatively young.
- \* In some African countries, half or more of the population is **under 25 years of age.**

# Definitions of Terminologies

**Immigrant:** Travel because of a push or pull factor in their home country. Their old country is pushing them out because of bad economic and sometime social conditions or their new country is pulling them through promise of better education and future. Their decision to leave their country is voluntary.

**Refugee:** They are immigrants who are flee for fear of persecution in his country, on the religious, political, racial, etc. Refugees are people who have fled violence or natural disasters. They feel if they stay where they are they will be detained, injured, or killed. They basically and seek/claim the status while still in their home country.

**Asylee** – On the other hand claims it after arriving to the other host country. The refugee and asylee, are mostly the same thing. The only difference is that refugee claims the status from his country and asylee claims the status upon arrival in the host country

**Alien:** The term alien is not to be confused with that of an immigrant. Just like Immigrants, there are two types of alien that we can discuss. The term legal alien refers to a person who is temporarily residing in a different country. A good example would be a student. In the short term, a student is allowed to enter the country to study. They have not been given permission to become a resident, but they have been allowed access to the country. We often term this kind of individual as a resident alien. An illegal alien is an individual who seeks refuge in another country through no fault of their own. They are not actively looking to change residency, but often find themselves unable to return to their place of origin. They seek refuge within another country but would prefer to return to their homeland.

**Migration:** -is the overall term for the movement of people between different countries.



# Cultural dimension concepts

- \* **1. Universalism – Particularism** – Africans are typically Particularist in that particular circumstances are seen as more important than rules. Bonds of particular relationships (family, friends) are stronger than any abstract rules. Response to a situation may change according to the circumstances and the people involved. African particularists often argue that “it all depends”. They do not always feel that things and situations are necessarily universal.
- \* **2. Specific – Diffuse** Generally, they are diffusely oriented and see each element in the perspective of the complete picture. All elements are related to each other. The elements are synthesized into a whole which is more than simply the sum of its parts. This dimension also concerns their degree of involvement in relationships. Specifically oriented individuals engage others in specific areas of life, affecting single levels of personality. They engage each other diffusely in multiple areas of life, affecting several levels of personality at the same time. In their diffusely oriented countries, every life space and every level of personality tends to be interwoven.



- \* **Individualism – Communitarianism** The dimension individualism versus communitarianism is about the conflict between an individual's desire and the interests of the group he belongs to. Africans primarily regard themselves as part of a group. They are firmly integrated into groups which provide help and protection in exchange for a strong sense of loyalty. They believe that an individual's quality of life improves when he takes care of his or her fellow man. The group comes before the individual, and people are mainly oriented towards common goals and objectives. Negotiation is often carried out by teams, who may withdraw in order to consult with reference groups. Discussion is used to reach consensus. This is unlike western societies where individualism is seen as typical of modern society. However, a modern society such as Japan has a strong communitarian orientation, which forces one to question this convention.

- \* **Neutral – Affective-** In this case Africans tend to be more neutral than affective especially in their physical demonstration of love and affection. In cases of death and disasters , they tend to be emotional and openly displays strong emotions. For the most part, it seems as if reason out plays emotions in relationships. Reason dominates one's interaction with others. They tend to have strong norms about how readily emotions should be revealed. It seem that they are taught that it is incorrect to overtly show feelings. In an affectively oriented culture like the US, it is accepted to show one's feelings spontaneously.
- \* **Achievement – Ascription-** Although the concept of achievement is becoming more accepted, Africans traditionally respect one's ascribed status in society. In most traditional communities, personal status is assigned or attributed by virtue and not necessarily performance.

- \* **Internal – External** The internal versus external control dimension concerns the meaning people assign to their environment. People who have an internally controlled mechanistic (or mechanistic) view of nature - a belief that one can dominate nature - usually view themselves as the point of departure for determining the right action. In contrast to this, cultures **like Africans with an externally** controlled (or organic) view of nature - which assumes that man is controlled by nature - orient their actions towards others. They focus on the environment rather than on themselves. These concepts are highly abstract terms, deliberately so because people seek to include a large number of “family resemblances” beneath each bifurcation.

- \* **Time Orientation** - Time orientation has two aspects for the African immigrant: Traditionally, Africans give relative importance to the past, present, and future in their approach to structuring time. Most activities were directed toward future prospects. However, due to changing times and personal experiences (war, poverty and strife), African immigrants are becoming more predominantly oriented towards the present, day-by-day experiences. They no longer seem to feel that the past is vitally significant to the future.
- \* **Sequentialism and synchronism** - In this case African immigrants tend to be synchronic as they view the past, present, and future as being interrelated. They usually do several things at once. Time commitments are desirable but are not absolute and plans are easily changed. Again they are having to make adjustment in their new western communities where people structure time sequentially and view time as a series of passing events. Here they tend to do one thing at a time, and prefer planning and keeping to plans once they have been made. They are learning to take time more seriously and staying on schedule.

# Pre Colonial Africa

- \* The continent of Africa has a long and colorful history with significant highlights of European influence and impact.
- \* Europeans first began exploring the northern coast of Africa around 332 B.C., when Alexander the Great came into Egypt and established the city of Alexandria. The Roman Empire soon after began to integrate much of North Africa's Mediterranean coastline into the Roman system.



# Pre-colonial Map of Africa



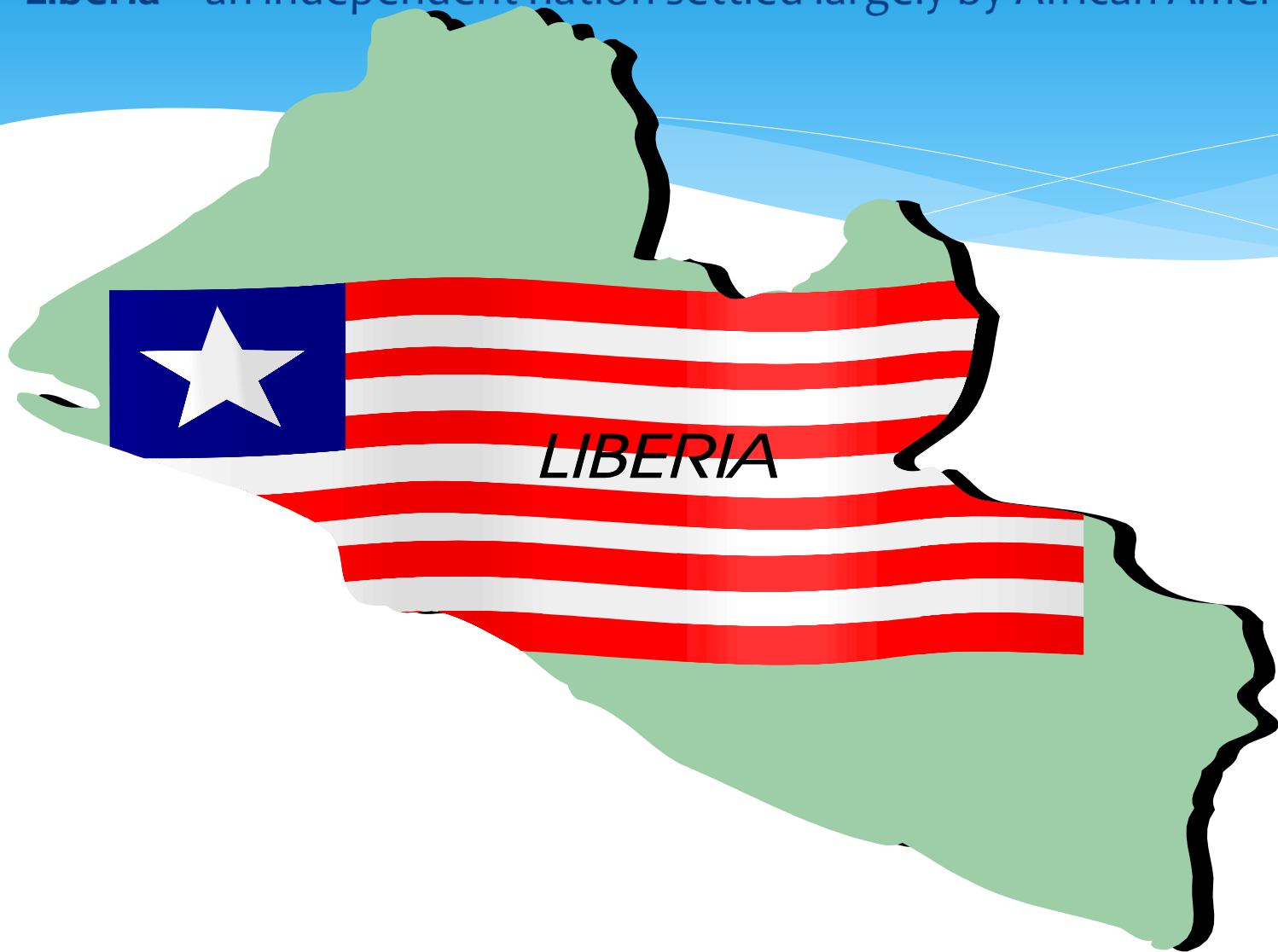
- \* Europeans initially settled in Africa in the mid-17th century near the Cape of Good Hope, at the southern end of the continent
- \* More Europeans immigrated during the subsequent colonial period
- \* During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, also referred to as the “scramble for Africa,” Europe colonized most of Africa





All but two African nations were  
never colonized by the European  
colonial power, and they are

\* **Liberia** - an independent nation settled largely by African Americans



**An Orthodox Christian nation  
known in Europe as Abyssinia.**



**ETHIOPIA**

# Africa in transition

The influx of African immigrants began in latter part of the 20th century and is often referred to as the “fourth great migration.” This trend began after [decolonization](#), as many Africans came to the United States seeking an education, and has risen steadily over time. Originally, these immigrants came with the sole purpose of advancing themselves before returning to their respective countries. However, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of African immigrants interested in gaining permanent residence in the United States. This has led to a severe [brain drain](#) on the economies of African countries due to many highly skilled professionals leaving Africa to seek their economic fortunes in the United States and elsewhere.

# Africa in Transition

- \* The flow of African immigrants to the US which began after decolonization in latter part of the 20th century and is often referred to as the “fourth great migration.” Many Africans came to the United States to seeking an education with the sole purpose of advancing themselves before returning to their respective countries. However, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of African immigrants interested in gaining permanent residence in the United States. This is due to rapidly changing economic and political conditions in Africa.

- \* In the **1950s** – as Africa slowly moved to become independent , it also slowly became a continent in crisis
- \* **1960s** - Independence and freedom of most African nations from colonial rule
- \* **1970s** – Beginning of post colonial periods
- \* **1980s** - The continent began to enter the **third millennium** free but tormented
- \* **1990- and 2000** - A period of **contradiction and confusion** that has resulted in massive poverty, political strife, major health concerns, war and violence.





Rainbow Town™\_ Documentary Trailer.mp4



# Map of Africa



# Recent trends


- \* The last two decades have been bleak ones for Africa
- \* There have been major famine such as the **Ethiopian disaster of 1984** (one of the first reported) prevailed
- \* A series of brutal civil wars has resulted in massacre and mutilation – earlier in **Angola , Rwanda**
- \* More recently in **Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia**

- \* People who are fleeing their native country for fear of any number of reasons become refugees in another country. The refugee process begins when a family flees its home country in hopes of reaching a refugee camp in a safer part of the country or a bordering country. Example of the **Bhutanese and Africans respectively**.
- \* Typically, at the refugee camp a small percent of people are given the option of being resettled into a foreign country like the United States or Great Britain. Resettlement is a last resort if the individual is unable to be safely integrated into the country of the camp and repatriation (return to home country) is seen as unsafe .

# African immigrants in the US

- \* The current estimated number of African immigrants in the United States is about 881,300 people
- \* Seventy five percent (75%) of the African immigrants in the USA come from 12 of the 55 countries, namely-  
Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Liberia, Somalia, Kenya, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Eritrea and Cape Verde
- \* 55% of immigrants from Africa are male, while 45% are female
- \* Age groups with the largest cohort of African-born immigrants are 25-34, 35-44, and 45-54 with 24.5%, 27.9%, and 15.0% respectively
- \* Census 2008

- \* Of the top ten zip codes where immigrants commonly settled in the US, four each are located in Maryland and Virginia, and two are in the District of Columbia.
- \* Between 1990 and 1998, nearly 250,000 immigrants from 193 countries and territories chose to live in the metropolitan area.
- \* In 1998, the Washington metropolitan area was the 5th most common destination for legal immigrants to the U.S. Only New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami were more popular.

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- \* In the past five years, over 200,000 refugees have resettled into the United States.
  - \* In 2006, the majority of refugees to the states were from Somalia – Africa (25%)

# Language

- \* Africa is the **most multilingual** continent in the world and has over a thousand spoken languages. UNESCO, estimates over two thousand languages are currently spoken in Africa
- \* The languages of Africa present a **unity of character** as well as **diversity**, as is manifest in all the dimensions of Africa
- \* Most Africans **speak multiple languages** well
- \* English, Arabic and French are the **official Languages** for most countries



# African Dialects and tribes

- \* **Tribes are distinct African language groups** - with cultures varying from tribe to tribe.
- \* Some tribes have traditions of clothing and accessories like jewelry, beads, shell and apparel that reflect their traditional origin
- \* Others use tattooing, piercing, scarring and the likes as forms of tribal identity.
- \* Masks, elaborate headgear, hunting gear, weapons, ritualistic artifacts, are used to mark identity, special abilities and status of the individuals.
- \* A number of social events are associated with the tribal cultures such as courtship, weddings, initiation into warrior groups, coming of age, feasting and other traditional celebrations.

## **Oral Traditions**

Word of mouth is a major way of communicating among Africans

African oral literature which consists of myths, origin fables, folklore, history, genealogy, folk remedies and is very popular with the people of Africa, who previously did not store this knowledge in written records, but rather passed it from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Singing and story telling are very popular and highly prized in the African society.

# Dialects and Tribes

- \* **Dialects** are **accepted linguistic** (tribes) varieties with different or unusual pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar from the standard language. They are accepted sub forms of languages which are generally compressible.
- \* There are **thousands of recognized** African dialects. A single country (like Nigeria) has over a hundred recognized dialects.
- \* Note that **accent is quite different from dialect** as accent mainly focuses on (spoken/verbalized) pronunciation. One's accent can be distinguished by their class, level of education/literacy and or region of dwelling.
- \* **Krio/Patwa** or broken English – is the most common dialect across Africa . It is a combination of about 15 languages

# Africa's Resources

- \* Africa's many natural resources include:
  - minerals – iron ore, aluminum ore, diamond, gold, cobalt, platinum, manganese, rutile, copper, chrome, zinc and petroleum.
- About half of the world's diamonds come from southern and central Africa. The **largest gem quality diamond** ever found (the 3106.75 carat Cullinan Diamond) came from the Premier Mine near Pretoria. It was found in 1905.
- Three of the world's largest gold producers have their primary operations in Africa – Harmony Gold, Gold Fields and Anglo-gold Ashanti


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- \* Africans have succeeded in dominating two very popular sports on the international arena
  - \* Soccer – also called football in Africa
  - \* And cricket

Both were introduced to the continent during the colonial reign

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- \* Although it has abundant natural resources, Africa remains the world's poorest and most underdeveloped continent with the bottom 10 ranked nations.

Example.....

- \* Sierra Leone/Liberia, Tanzania, Burundi, Malawi, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Dem. Rep. of Congo, Mali, Congo, Somalia, Zimbabwe

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- \* A recent Harvard University study showed that with its current **resources**, Africa could easily **feed and sustain itself**, if only it had decent governance.
  - \* In recent years, some nations like the People's Republic of China have built increasingly stronger ties with African nations.
  - \* In 2007, Chinese companies invested a total of US\$1 billion in Africa.



- \* Currently, many countries in Africa face major problems, from famine and drought to economic hardships to epidemics of AIDS, cholera and other diseases
- \* Ongoing local conflicts have also killed thousands of people and hampered the economic progress of African countries
- \* Many Africans have had to migrate to the west in an attempt to make life better

# African immigrants- Newcomers to the US

- \* African Immigrants- different from Afro American, Afro Caribbean and Afro Latinos, who are descended from Black Africans who survived the Atlantis slave trade within the boundaries of the present-day United States , the Caribbean and Latin America.
- \* The term ***African*** in the scope of this presentation refers to national origins rather than racial affiliation.



The Greater Washington region has become one of the top immigrant destinations in the country. Between 1980 and 2000, it attracted about 575,000 immigrants.

By 2000, 832,016 immigrants made up 17% of the region's population.

Unlike many high-immigration regions, Greater Washington has both a remarkable diversity of newcomers and a wide dispersion of immigrants throughout the region, even in the far-flung suburbs. **Of the top-ten zip codes of immigrant settlement, four each are located in Virginia**

Brookings Institute, 2001

# Immigration Patterns and Wave


The influx of African immigrants (fourth great migration)- began in the late 1900s

Africans came with the sole purpose to seek higher education and return to their respective country.

Immigration has increased steadily since, due to growing adverse conditions in Africa

African immigrants interested in gaining permanent residence in the United States has increased in recent years.

This has led to a severe [brain drain](#) on the economies of African countries due to many highly skilled professionals leaving Africa to seek their economic fortunes in the United States and elsewhere.

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- \* Studies show that as a group, Africans are said to be amongst the most educated in the world.
  - \* The percentage of Africans in the US with a graduate degree is highest among Nigerian Americans at 28.3 percent, followed closely by Egyptian Americans at 23.8 percent.
  - \* Of the African-born population in the United States age 25 and older, 87.9% reported having a high school degree or higher
  - \* Eighteen people from Africa have been awarded a Nobel prize. They come from Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa

## \* African immigrants “New comers” To the Metro Area

- \* Since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, about 0.8 to 0.9 million Africans (or 3.3% of the total immigrants) have immigrated to the United States
- \* According to INS records, one third of all refugee to the US in 2007 were Africans
- \* *“The Washington area attracts the largest proportional Flow of Africans of any major metropolitan area in the United States.”*

- \* African immigrants account for **16.2** percent of the recent arrivals in the Washington region
- \* The **Washington area** attracts the **largest** proportional flow of Africans of any major metropolitan area in the United States.
- \* The dominant African source country for the Washington metropolitan area is **Ethiopia 16**, accounting for one-quarter of all African newcomers. Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Somalia follow, making up the top five African source countries in the 1990s. Like immigrants from Latin America, African immigrants prefer the neighborhoods inside the
- \* Beltway—70 percent reside there.

- \* Although African immigrants are found in the majority of the area's zip codes, there are concentrations in some suburban areas where African-Americans are the majority—especially in **Prince George's County, Montgomery County and the District of Columbia.** pattern of African residential concentration, in Prince George's County and Montgomery County, in sections of South Arlington/East Fairfax along Columbia Pike, and in the Petworth/Brightwood Park area of the District of Columbia.
- \* Africans accounted **for 21 percent** of new immigrants to the District of Columbia and **26 percent** of new immigrants to Prince George's county



# Metro Areas with largest Africans (2000 Census)


**Metros with largest African-born population (2000 Census)**

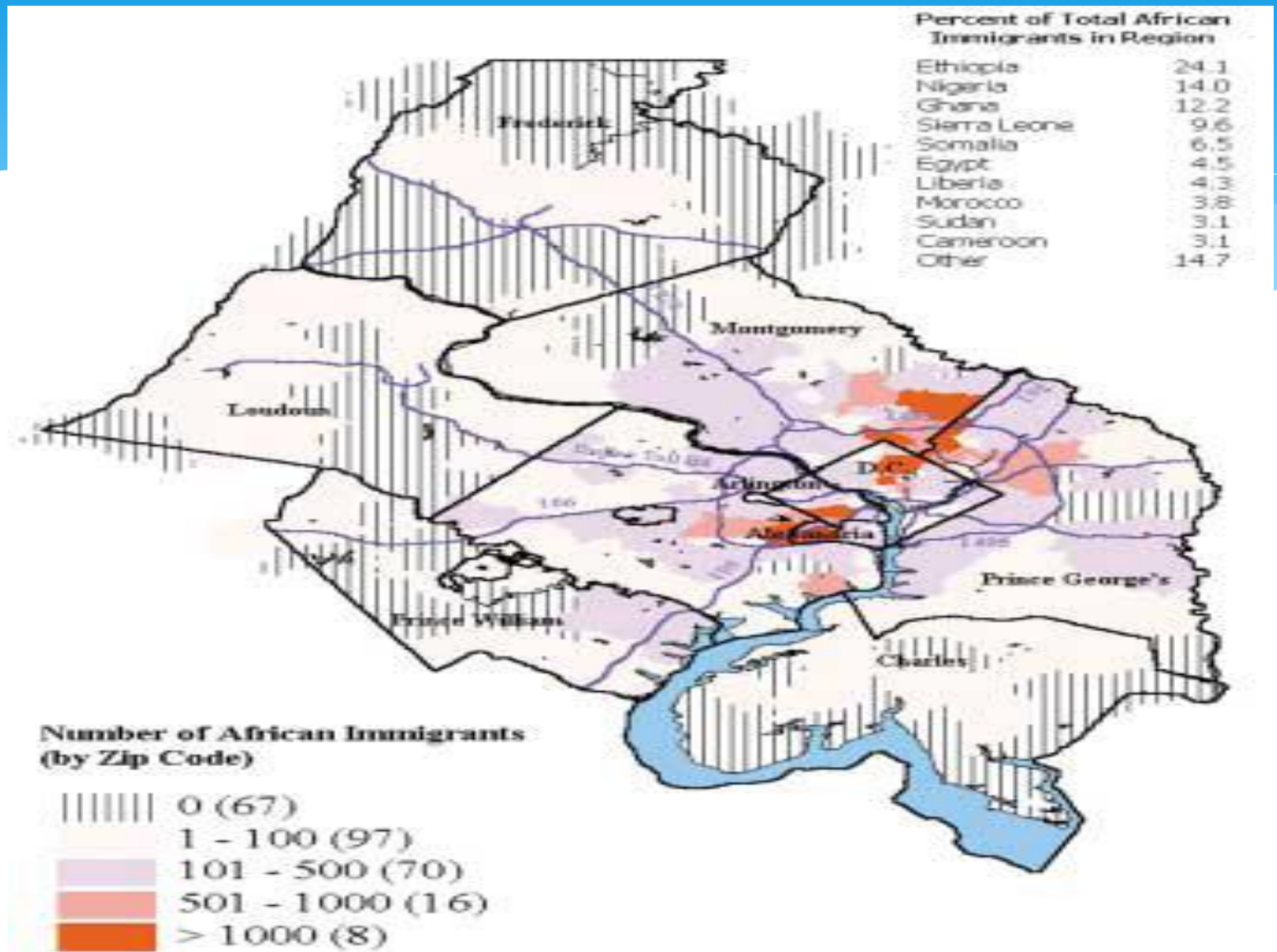
<b>Metropolitan Area</b>	<b>African Population</b>	<b>% Black total</b>	<b>of % of Total Metro Population</b>
<a href="#"><u>Washington, DC</u></a> , MD-VA-WV	80,281	6.1	1.6
<a href="#"><u>New York, NY</u></a>	73, 851	3.4	0.8
<a href="#"><u>Atlanta</u></a> , GA	34,302	2.9	0.8
<a href="#"><u>Minneapolis-St. Paul</u></a> , MN-WI	27,592	15.4	0.9
<a href="#"><u>Greater Los Angeles Area</u></a>	25,829	2.7	0.3
<a href="#"><u>Detroit</u></a> , MI	24,231	2.1	0.6
<a href="#"><u>Houston</u></a> , TX	22,683	3.1	0.5
<a href="#"><u>Chicago</u></a> , IL	19,438	2.4	0.7
<a href="#"><u>Dallas, TX</u></a>	19,134	3.6	0.5
<a href="#"><u>Boston</u></a> , MA-NH	17,344	9.8	0.7

County. These figures are proportionately higher than their overall representation, 16.2 percent, within the immigrant population.

Ethiopians are ranked third among new immigrants in South Arlington's 22204 zip code and in the District's petworth/Brightwood Park (20011) neighborhood. They are the single largest immigrant group in the ethnically diverse **Landmark area (22304) of Alexandria, Virginia.**

It appears that African immigrants are drawn to areas where diverse immigrant populations have settled.


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- \* Prince William County, VA has experienced rapid population growth and dynamic change. The county's total population more than doubled between 1980 and 2006, while its immigrant population swelled to more than 14 times its 1980 size. Between 2000 and 2006



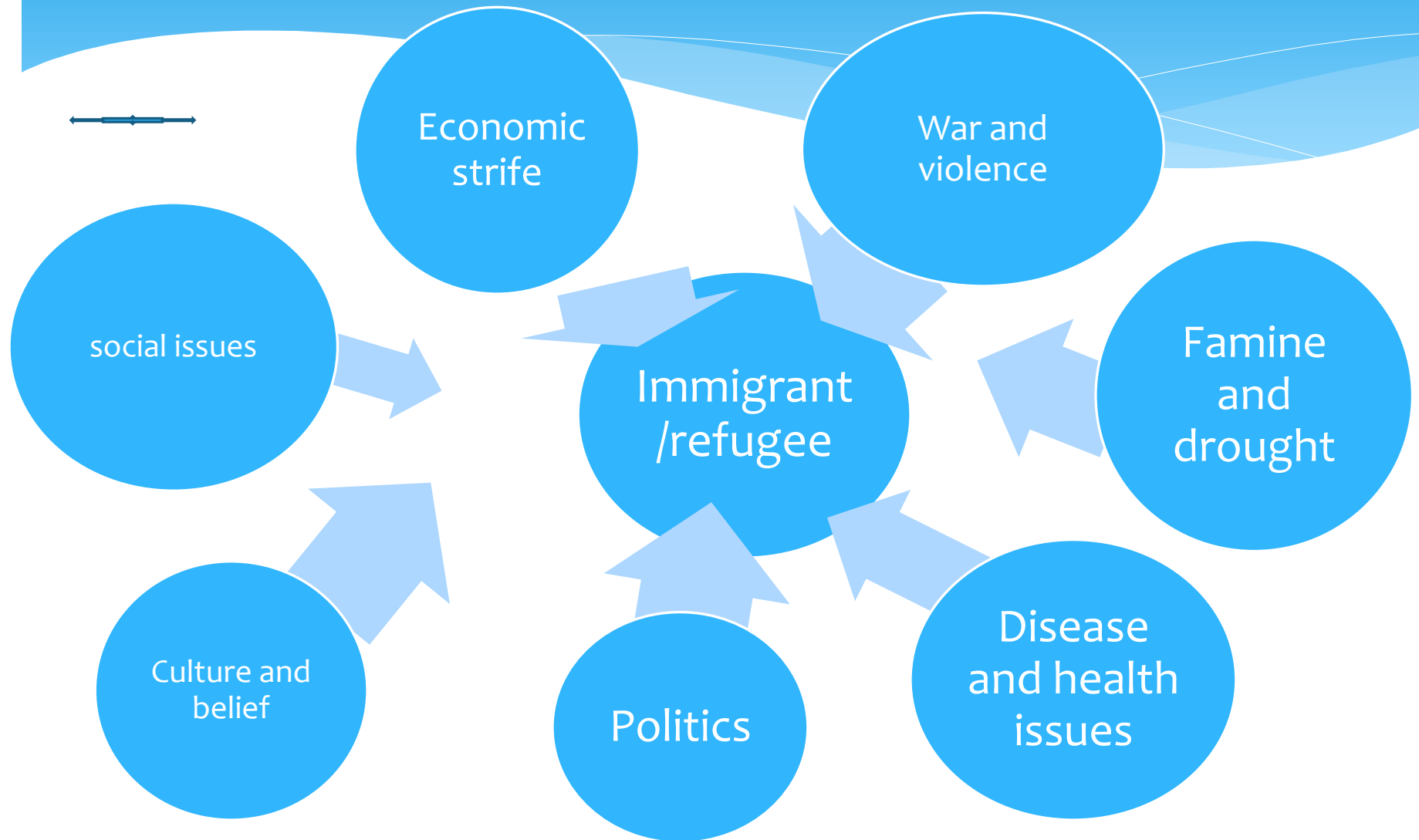
## \* Recent African Immigrants to the Washington Metropolitan Area, 1990–1998

\* Number of African Immigrants

- \* (by Zip Code)
- \* Percent of Total African
- \* Immigrants in Region
- \* Ethiopia 24.1
- \* Nigeria 14.0
- \* Ghana 12.2
- \* Sierra Leone 9.6
- \* Somalia 6.5
- \* Egypt 4.5
- \* Liberia 4.3
- \* Morocco 3.8
- \* Sudan 3.1
- \* Cameroon 3.1
- \* Other 14.7

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- \* Current new immigrants migrate (sometimes involuntarily) mainly to flee negative conditions such as war, diseases, poverty and political persecutions.
  - \* Yet others migrate to be reunited with families, marriage, sponsored by agencies, trafficking and few adoptions.

# Pre Immigration issues among recent immigrants



# Pre-settlement Issues

- \* War and Violence
- \* Poverty and Disease
- \* Abuse and Victimization
- \* Daily living and functioning
- \* Lack of structure
- \* Break down of systems
- \* Trauma related experiences
- \* Lack of basic needs
- \* Lack of necessary support services
- \* English and Language skills
- \* Communication –verbal Vs non verbal
- \* Education/literacy skills
- \* Rural Vs Urban life style
- \* Cultural differences
- \* Lack of understanding of systems and processes



# Resettlement issues

Little/ no orientation to new community  
Failure to address past experiences  
Inappropriate interactions  
Re-traumatizing experiences  
Fear and Anxiety  
Lack of information and resources  
Change in life style  
Change in roles and responsibilities  
Values and Beliefs modifications  
Family and community structures  
Systems and Processes  
Child rearing and discipline  
Health and mental health  
Customs and Rituals

# Resettlement Issues

- \* Expectations and Fades
- \* Culture shock
- \* Community engagement
- \* Post traumatic stress/Mental health
- \* Medical/health concerns

# Working with African immigrants

## \* Communication

Verbal and non verbal

Language-

Basic vs. Standard

Literate vs. Illiterate


Translation vs. Interpreting

Dialects vs. Slangs

Cultural values and norms

# Culture

- \* Over time, some traditional African cultural practices have begun to be westernized
- \* **Culture and religion** - are deeply intertwined in the African way of life
- \* **Rich and diverse** - culture varies so much that it not only changes from one country to another, but within an individual country there are many different cultures with tribes and religious groupings.
- \* Most cultural activities centers on the **family, religion and/or specific ethnic tradition.**
- \* **Art, music, and oral literature** serve to reinforce religious and social patterns. .
- \* **African Proverbs** offer wisdom and poetry in just one sentence. Proverbs play an important part in African cultures all across the continent. The beauty of proverbs is **the universality of their meaning**, everyone can relate to them in some way, on some level. Yet they are also uniquely African and help us **gain an insight into African culture....**

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- \* In recent years, traditional African culture has also become synonymous with rural poverty and subsistence living.
  - \* African immigrants attempts to retain their culture even in the United States and other parts of the west.

## **Arts and Crafts**

Arts and crafts have a **rich tradition in Africa**. Wood, metal, gourds and leather are used for fashioning all types of work. African arts *and crafts include sculpture, paintings, pottery, ceremonial and religious headgear, ritual articles, musical instruments, weapons and dress.*

## **African Culture and Food**

African cuisine largely consists of local influences and colonial additions and includes vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy products. Grains, cassava and yams form the basis for many meals. Stews of vegetables and meat are quite popular. Influences from migrants and immigrants such as Arabs, Indians, Europeans, etc. add to the kind of food and cuisines available.

# Religion

- \* Africans are **spiritual and honor** various religious beliefs, practices and traditions.
- \* African immigrants practice a diverse array of religions, including **Christianity, Islam, Shamanism, Judaism, spiritualism, witchcraft and various traditional African** and world religions.
- \* However, the largest African immigrant religious groups in the United States are made up of pentecostal / Charismatic Christians and Muslims respectively.

# Influence of Religions and traditions on daily functioning

- \* Religious traditions and institutions are **pluralistic**.
- \* Facilities are seen not only as religious institutions, but mostly also as **civic centers**.
- \* These institutions serve as **central to persevering ethnic identity** among these communities.
- \* They are also **central networks facilities** and **provide services** such as counseling, shelter, employment, financial assistance, health services, and even real estate resources.



- \* The Pentecostal/Charismatic form of Christianity is a primarily evangelical, born-again sect that emphasizes holiness, fervent prayer, charismatic revival, proximate salvation, speaking in tongues, baptism of the Holy Spirit, faith healing, visions, and divine revelations.
- \* These practices are remnants of the influence of traditional worship practices such as spirit possession, divination and ancestor worship.

- \* Followers of traditional African religions may pray to various secondary deities as well as to their ancestors.
- \* According to them, these secondary gods serve as intermediaries between humans and the creator God.
- \* Most African believe in a single creator God. Some people also deify entities like the earth, the sun, the sea, lightning, or Nature. Each deity has its own leader/priest or priestess.

# Virtue

- \* **Virtue** in African traditional practice/religion is often connected with the communal aspect of life.

Examples include social behaviors such as the **respect for parents and elders, appropriately raising children, providing hospitality, and being honest, trustworthy and courageous.**

# Traditional Healers

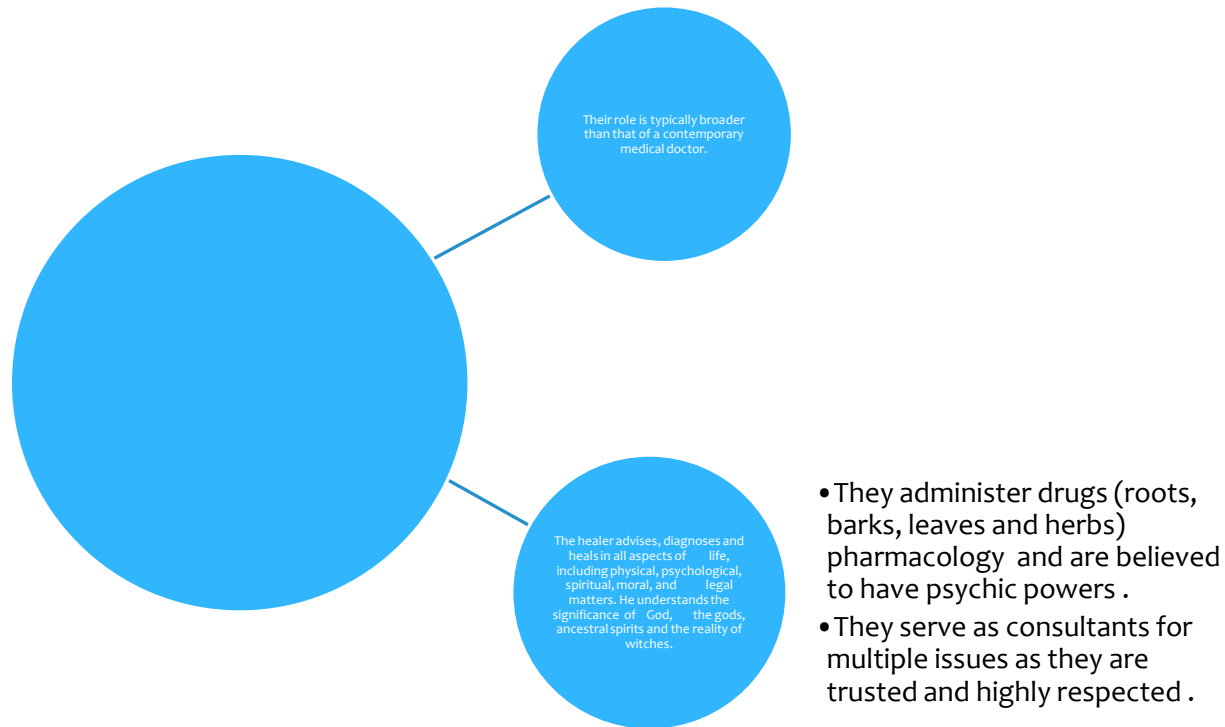
- \* **They are very well respected as their roles are pluralistic**

- \* Their role is typically broader than that of a contemporary medical doctor.

The healer advises, diagnoses and heals in all aspects of life, including physical, psychological, spiritual, moral, and legal matters. He understands the significance of God, the gods, ancestral spirits and the reality of witches.

- \* They administer drugs (roots, barks, leaves and herbs) pharmacology and are believed to have psychic powers .
- \* They serve as consultants for multiple issues as they are trusted and highly respected .

# Traditional Healer



# Rituals and Liturgy

- \* **Liturgy and rituals**
- \* “Unusual” rituals are important aspects of African traditional spiritual practices. Rituals are often done according to the life cycle of the year and other environmental factors. There are craft rituals, such as in smiting. There are specific time honored rituals on building new homes, births and deaths, weddings and on the assumption of leadership, etc.
- \* Each group/deity has its own rituals and set of rules for them.

## \* For example ....Pouring Libation

- \* Africans often honor ancestors by pouring a libation (paying homage).
  - This is done in various ceremonial gatherings, and ritualistic ways including rhythmic drumming during celebrations
  - Sacrificing the first harvest
  - Silent observances at funerals and memorial services
  - Pouring out a small portion of a new drink in guise of giving the dead the first "taste" of a drink before the living consume

# Resettlement Issues

- \* Although a number of African immigrants eventually decide to live permanently in the United States by becoming American citizens, for many African newcomers their sojourn is temporary; they plan to return to their countries at a later date. For those who decide to stay, the decision is not taken lightly and without sacrifice. **Yusef Ford, associate director of the Ethiopian Community Center**, notes that in becoming an American citizen - a move that he hesitated to make for two decades in the United States - he was obliged to forfeit rights to his father's inheritance in Ethiopia.

More recently, a few Africans have been able to move between residences on the African and North American continents. Some African countries are beginning to permit **dual citizenship** and are establishing agencies and offices to address this latest development. Whether Africans are permanent residents, citizens, or temporary sojourners, they often have the responsibility of promoting healthy acculturation and maintaining family ties including sending support to families in Africa as well as support families here in the US.



# Issues among African immigrants and refugees

- \* Documentation and legal status in the USA
- \* Multiple mental health and medical needs
- \* Culture shock and disorientation (of being in a new/ strange/ foreign environment).
- \* Language
- \* Education and literacy ( concepts and processes)
- \* Housing
- \* Acculturation and community engagement
- \* Employment and Finance
- \* Family issues (dynamics and social/legal implications)

# Family dynamics- cultural and Social implications

Initially, life for African immigrants can be extremely difficult in the US

They are often challenged by various non traditional structures, systems and processes

They become challenged by the process of acculturation, parenting, religion, relationships, Isolation, depression, stress, grief and loss

## \* **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FAMILY**

- \* Traditional Family Style - Hierarchy
- \* Importance of the larger kin group (extended family) beyond the nuclear family.
- \* Dedication of the extended family to the raising and support of children.
- \* Lack of public display of affection.
- \* Care and respect for the elderly.
- \* Marriage as a series of interrelated ceremonies.
- \* Polygamy (often informally) as a desired measure of social success or status; male access to younger women and female division of labor.
- \* Less prominence of romance in courtship and marriage.
- \* Constrained communication between parents and children.

# Parenting and child rearing











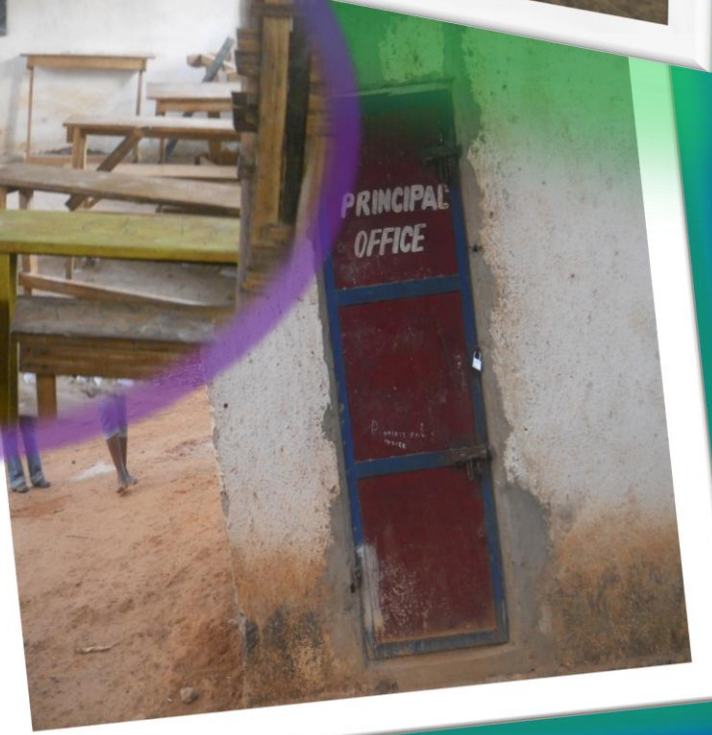


# Totkeleh









**Parenting and child welfare** is a primary responsibility of both the parents and extended family community

Africa immigrant parents are **loving, caring** and mostly seek the best for their children

They are often **not as expressive and vocal of their feelings** towards their children mainly because of cultural norms.

They may some times **utilize corporal and “bizarre”** types of discipline

They may present as insensitive to the feelings and needs of their children because of **cultural norms and limitations**

Parents often feel their children are at a disadvantage and are unprepared to succeed in schools

- \* Some parents/cultures treat children differently **based on gender**
- \* Some parents are often not as supportive of their children's participation in **extra curriculum activities**
- \* Parents entrust the **school system** with more **authority** and responsibility for the socialization of their children
- \* Parents often **lack understanding** or feel **intimidated** by the school and similar systems

# Parenting Type

- \* **Authoritarian/Totalitarian parenting**

This is a **restrictive, punitive** style in which parents exhort the child to follow directions and to respect their work and effort.

- \* Parent is **strict, demanding and controlling** but not responsive.

Parent expect much of their child but generally do not explain the reasoning for the rules or boundaries.

- they expect them to conform and comply to rules and directions
- there is little or no open dialogue between parent and child
- often **more likely to punish or spank a child** rather than discuss the problem

- \* Some studies of families show that when parents are too strict with their child, the child may break down, rebel, or even leave home earlier
- \* Other researchers have found that in some cultures and ethnic groups, **aspects of authoritarian style may be associated with more positive child outcomes.**



# Authoritative /Assertive Democratic Parenting

\* Also called 'balanced /new wave parenting''

The parent is **demanding but responsive**

- \* Characterized by a **child-centered approach that holds high expectations** of maturity.
- \* Parent can be understand of child's feelings and teach them how to regulate them.
- \* They often help them to find appropriate outlets to solve problems.
- \* It encourages children to be independent but still places limits and controls on their actions.
- \* Extensive verbal give-and-take is allowed, and parents are warm and nurturing toward the child

## **\* Related Families stressors**

\* Long work hours, both parents working, children left alone after school, cramped living quarters often in unsafe neighborhoods, financial worries (including helping families back home), long commutes to and from work, daily language barriers, and other challenges are take their toll. They feel intimidated or excluded from their children's school life. Parents may appear exhausted. Many are discouraged. They say they have no time to relax, socialize with their children, other family members or neighbors, or to help each other. These pressures lead to fractured relationships within families, increased stress, and serious health issues.

\* **Cultural gaps and clashes** - Children tend to embrace American culture while parents hold onto traditions

- \* Some parents feel their children *(the young) are running away from the culture, running away from the parents,*
- \* *They feel it is ignorant and it causes embarrassment*
- \* *They are challenged by the extended family dynamics and multi generational issues*
- \* *Sometimes challenged by extended separation and reunification issues*




**Reunification stresses**  
**Residue of war and poverty**  
**Discussion- case examples**



# African immigrants need

- \* Improve access to quality care that is culturally relevant
- \* Improve access to quality care in rural and geographically remote areas.
- \* Early Health and Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Referral to Services
- \* Culturally competent providers/professionals
- \* To become partners and stakeholders in their own affairs
- \* To be appreciated and accepted in their new communities
- \* *Links with treatment and supports services*
- \* *Community orientation, education and training*
- \* *Community and school based cultural programs for children*
- \* *Resources and services*

- 
- \* Access to basic services for the uninsured and undocumented
  - \* Preserve the rights and dignity of refugees and asylees awaiting processing
  - \* Support fair and timely processing of all immigrants


# Challenges to service and treatment

- \* The success of a referral to a mental health professional depends on the client's willingness to disclose information about his or her mental wellbeing.
- \* The average refugee does not willingly disclose information about mental disturbances, such as depression and nightmares.
- \* Some ethnic groups find disturbances to be socially unacceptable and prefer to deal with the issues at home.
- \* There is a cultural gap between the types of treatment for mental disorders and the client's perspective
- \* Many of the refugees do not understand and therefore do not trust the Western "talk therapy" method.
- \* Some individuals prefer to hold séances or exorcisms in order to relieve the person from this disorder

- \* A study of Black immigrants found that mental health treatment-seeking behavior was low
  - \* in first generation Americans, but it was higher in the population born in the U.S. (Jackson et al., 2007).
- 
- \* Clinical research done with the Haitian population suggests that psychologists incorporate the culture's traditional form of therapy into treatment of special groups. The study found that Haitian women suffering from depression believed the cause of their disorder was due to a disconnection with the gods. They would then perform voodoo rights in order to cure themselves of the disease.
  - \* The study found that the Western treatment is more successful when voodoo elements were incorporated (Nicolas et al., 2007).

# Mental health concerns in the US

- \* Concern for cultural stigmas around receiving mental health services.**
- \* Many immigrants and refugees have difficulty discussing mental health needs.
- \* Some cultures are averse to Western ideas of counseling and psychotherapy.

- 
- \* Immigrants often have difficulty conceptualizing and adequately discussing mental health needs and concepts such as Trauma, stress and depression.
  - \* There is a big need for mental health services that are both affordable and culturally relevant.
  - \* There is a lack of enough culturally competent mental health providers

# **Towards a more culturally Competent system**

The movement toward more culturally competent mental health service systems can be traced back to 1988, when the National Institute of Mental Health's (NIMH's) Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) established a Minority Initiative Resource Committee. During committee meetings, it was apparent that a new framework for dealing with diversity was needed. A subcommittee was formed; and their work, begun in May 1988, resulted in a monograph entitled *Towards A Culturally Competent System of Care*


This was a seminal effort because the proposed model does not set blame for racial/ethnic disparities or imply that a racial/ethnic quota is needed to fix the disparities.

Cross et al., 1989

# Some testimonials....

- \* “Even to go to a psychologist, people think you are crazy if you go to see a psychologist.” An immigrant suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, recounted a confrontation with her parents: “I had to go to counseling and my parents could not accept that idea. They stated it was something shameful.”






\* In addition, some pointed to a lack of cultural sensitivity from providers as an obstacle to seeking care. According to a conversation with one person, “most providers are still unprepared to deal effectively (with any cultural sensitivity) with the community.” When doctors cannot connect effectively with their patients, she continued, “this increases mistrust and suspicion among the immigrant/refugee community professionals.”

\* Some immigrants and refugees also have expectations about health care providers that are at odds with the American system. Many immigrants and refugees tell us that they prefer a provider who shares their background, while women from some cultures —particularly the Somali and Arab (mainly Muslim) women groups—prefer to visit only another female provider, and yet this rarely happens. Many also expect to be cared for by a doctor and dislike the widespread use of nurses in the U.S. health system. A Somali refugee in Portland, Maine, for example, recalled a visit to a local emergency room where she felt insulted when treated by the nurse instead of a doctor.

\* According to a service worker, . “A lot of them are coming here traumatized. They get here, they become re-traumatized. And the reason for that is because of [culture] shock...a lot of people are traumatized, a lot of people are depressed and they don’t even know it,” Another refugee from Sierra Leone stated that “physically it seems we are here in the US, in a peaceful environment, but mentally and socially, we are still fighting the war that we left back home...there are no mechanisms upon which we find or rely on for consistent [for help].”



“I came from a war- torn country and I was having anxiety attacks on a daily basis going to graduate school and working. I literally collapsed. I had no idea that I was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.”

## \* **Bhutanese Refugees testimonies - North America**

- \* Before 2008 there were an estimated 150 Bhutanese refugees living in the USA and a further 30 in Canada.
- \* By the end of 2009 over 22,000 Bhutanese had moved with the resettlement program to start new lives in the US and 892 had moved to Canada.
- \* Here a few people, some of whom settled in North America before the resettlement program and some of whom came with the resettlement program, recount their stories.



## \* **Hemlal's testimony**

- \* I did not see any future in staying in the camps, particularly for my kids who needed immediate support for their education and wellbeing. I also felt that my own skills were being wasted. Most of all being stateless for so long was demoralizing me, so I had to take some step to find better avenues.
- \* You can still support the movement from wherever you are settled, so I felt I could still do something even from far away. I was trying to migrate to wherever it was possible, but I felt that at that time Canada was more welcoming to refugees than any other country. We were the first family to migrate legally from the camp on their own account, which paved a way for others to move anywhere in the world.

## \* **Arrival in Canada**

- \* With lots of expectation and hope of being able to restart my own life all over again we landed in Canada. Some of the difficulties that we had to face were the extreme weather conditions, acquiring a driver's license (I failed three times before I got one) and getting a job - everyone wanted to know whether we had previous Canadian work experience.
- \* But the biggest problem was adapting to Canadian society, especially for my wife and daughter. With very little or no education, my wife had many difficulties in getting used to our new culture. Learning a new language, getting around by bus and looking for jobs were problematic for her.
- \* My daughter even said she wanted to go back. In her first year she used to come back crying and disheartened from school. She had a hard time making friends and adapting to the system, especially at her age (she was just entering her teens).

- \* **Employment** - Getting a job is one thing, but performing well at your job is also not that easy. Any kind of work here takes lots of commitment and effort. By the end of the day you are exhausted and then you must go home and cook and get ready for the next day.
- \* Today I feel that even if I am not there tomorrow to support my family they can survive on their own. You don't realize that you are improving yourself, as well as your lifestyle, each day. I am very happy that I could do something for my family as well as for the community.
- \* We came to Canada with nothing but debt. But today we have a home, both our kids will be completing university within the next couple of years, and together my wife and I make a comfortable annual earning. With the little money we save, we can still support our parents and relatives back home, as well as some students in the camps. The best part of all is that we don't have to worry much about healthcare, the education of the kids, and our retirement.



- \* We are all treated equally here. The feeling that you are no longer a stateless person gives you the confidence to be yourself. Today we are very thankful to Canadian society for giving us the opportunity to become one of them.

- \* **Reflections on Bhutan**

- \* On the outside things look good, almost too good to be true, but in my dreams my thoughts are always with my parents, my relatives, my neighborhood, my community, my village, my country where I was born.
- \* Even though we are not yet organized as a group globally, we are all in close communication regarding our situation. In Canada we are in a process of registering an organization in the near future. We just concluded the draft copy of the constitution and are in the process finalizing it.
- \* Likewise in the US they are working towards a nationally registered organization. Through the media, people getting together in meetings and with telecommunications we manage to stay in touch. I am confident that we will find a way to an amicable solution for the situation in the camps.


## \* **Drishya's testimony**

- \* When we first came to the US, we quickly found out that it was not quite like what we had seen on TV. Life was fast, as was traffic and everyone was busy.
- \* Here in California I saw people from numerous ethnic backgrounds and at times I wondered whether we were in America at all. They spoke in various languages and hardly understood my accent in the common language of English.
- \* Cultural shock manifested itself in many ways and my mother, sister and I were depressed and thought a lot about going back to Bhutan. One day my dad clearly told us 'No, we cannot go back to Bhutan.'
- \* Soon after that he left his job and moved to another place called Alameda where we found 7 other households from Southern Bhutan. We made friends with their children, went to school together and the attachment we had for our country Bhutan and our grandparents, friends and others and slowly faded away.

## \* **My father's story**

- \* I was a young child when my father brought us here to the US. I hated him so much because I missed my whole life in Bhutan.
- \* But after hearing my father's story, I am very happy and feel that he did the right thing. Every question I asked him, he has explained it to me.
- \* He is trying his best to give us a decent life and education. He wants us to become responsible citizens of the United States and the world and not to forget his people in Bhutan.

- \* My father's name is Dick Bahadur Chhetri. He was born in the kingdom of Bhutan, an underdeveloped country in the eastern Himalaya in South East Asia.
- \* In the 1960s, when my dad was a child, the Royal Government of Bhutan had just started to open its door to the outside world. At the same time the government started development works like building roads and highways, with help from India.
- \* They began to construct a road in our village. When the people from the village first saw bulldozers digging the ground they thought the bulldozer was some kind of herbivore and came up with bundles of grass to feed it. When the driver came down to explain to the villagers that it was a machine they thought he was some kind of super human being and greeted him with flowers and garlands.

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- \* My grandparents, who were illiterate, lived in Ossey, which was four and half miles from Surey. They lived in poverty and depended on farming in the middle of a jungle where the domestic and wild animals ate whatever crops they tried to cultivate.

- \* In 1972, on the advice of my dad's youngest brother, who later went on to become a brigadier in the Royal Bhutan Army (only to be sacked in 1999), my grandparents decided to send my father, one of their 10 children, to a school in Surey. He was nine years old.
- \* Every day he had to walk barefoot nine miles in the cold. The teachers used to spank him for his tardiness. Later when the teachers found out the distance and difficulties he had in coming to school they were amazed at his excellent grades.

- \* They started using him as an example to others. In 1973 he got a double promotion and became the teachers' favorite student. In 1977 he was sent to the local high school by the government.
- \* He liked school because he was very much loved and praised by the teachers. He still remembers at least one of his favorite teachers, who is now in the refugee camps in Nepal.
- \* My father became the first graduate in the family and the first pilot from southern Bhutan. He won a fellowship from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), who paid for his training.

- \* But fate meant that my father had to leave his country. In 1990 the king of Bhutan started his "One Nation, One People" policy which mandated a dress code and cultural etiquette in an effort to make a homogenized society.
- \* But my father belonged to a distinct ethnic group that had its own heritage. Even though the King had been his role model from a young age he had the courage to disagree with the King's policies. As he believed in truth and justice, he went to meet His Majesty the King three times only to suffer more persecutions.
- \* I did not know until much later that my 64 year-old grandpa was beaten in public by the army. My father was beaten by the police and my uncles were jailed and tortured. I did not know until I came to the US that my Dad's property was confiscated and he was unjustly fined large sums of money. I did not know that my mother, my sister and I were stateless in Bhutan until I heard my father's story.
- \* Now I understand why my mother did not tell me the true reason why my dad was away, and why nobody talked about what was going on in Bhutan. The king evicted the people who did not agree with his policies using insidious methods and by committing extreme human rights abuses.
- \* My father was smart enough to rescue us by finding a way to the United States.



THE ROOTS OF ALL SUCCESSFUL  
RELATIONSHIPS LAY WITHIN  
THE FOLDS OF CLEAR AND EFFECTIVE  
COMMUNICATIONS



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# Notes

- \* Some believe the word Africa comes from the Latin word "aprica", which means "sunny".
- \* Others say that it comes from the Greek word "aphrike", which means "without cold".
- \* Another interesting theory comes from Roman history, which says a large portion of people who lived in northern Africa were named "afri" when the Romans happened upon them. The Romans supposedly applied their suffix "ca", which means "country" or "land".
- \* Whatever the reason for the name, we now know Africa as a beautiful and diverse.
- \* Article Source: <http://EzineArticles.com/640988>